

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



February, 2004

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 802409

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CHAIRMAN

Peter A. Tarplee

01372 452301

SECRETARY

01372 386348

TREASURER

Judith Mills

01372 372146

The Society meets on the third Friday of the month at the Letherhead Institute from September to May. For details see programme in this issue.

2002 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£12.00

Associate.....£5.00

Junior (under 18)..... £1.00

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jack Barker

01372 458469

The Museum will remain closed until 4th April. From that date opening times will be : -

Thursdays and Fridays 1.0 p.m. to 4.0 p.m.

Saturdays 10.0 a.m. to 4.0 p.m.

CURATOR

Graham Evans

01372 386348

The Library at The Letherhead Institute is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. **It is no longer open on Saturdays**

Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

Gwen Hoad

01372 273934

The Records are available for study by arrangement.

RECORDS SECRETARY

Brian Godfrey

01372 454654

Lectures . Co-ordination of the Society's lecture and visits programme and L & D L H S speakers for local societies.

PROGRAMME & LECTURE SECRETARY Gordon Knowles

01372 458396

The Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy for the May 2002 issue should reach the Society's Office by 19th April, 2002.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

John Wettern

01372 459277

The Friends of Leatherhead Museum support the Society's work on behalf of the Museum.

SECRETARY

Thelma Lucas

01372 844345

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

On a number of occasions recently I have been told of representations made by the Society on planning and similar matters. In fact, someone telephoned me to thank the Society for objecting to a proposed development. In all of these instances the representations have presumably been made by individual members; they certainly have not been made by the Society. I have had journalists and planning officers asking me to elaborate on *the Society's opinions*. Obviously any member, or indeed any individual, is free to express their own opinion on a particular proposal but I would ask that they do not give this opinion as that of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society.

There are amenity societies who consider and comment on planning matters, but I do not think that, in general, this is the role of the Local History Society. As we do not discuss these subjects, the Society can have no corporate opinion, so although anyone with opinions is welcome to express them as a private individual I must ask that you neither use the Society's notepaper nor give the impression that you are writing on behalf of the Society.

With this *Newsletter* you will receive all the papers for the forthcoming Annual General Meeting and I would, once more, urge all members to consider whether there is any way in which they could contribute to the running of the Society. We often congratulate ourselves on all that the Society achieves with the monthly lectures, the operation of the museum, publication and marketing of our books, publication of regular *Newsletters* and *Proceedings*, running a library and keeping archives of the area. This all involves a considerable amount of work which at present falls on too few shoulders. There are a number of vacancies on the committee as well as a number of people doing more than one job. I would ask that if anyone feels that they would like to help please

talk to me, or any other committee member. It would be a pity to limit even more what the Society can do.

This reminds me of my appeal in the last *Newsletter* for a representative on the planning committee for Heritage Weekend. No one has volunteered for this and it seems that the Local History Society may not be involved in the organisation of this event which is very relevant to our sphere of interest.

Peter Tarplee

OUR FIRST MEMBER?

I have recently received two letters from Rev. Dr S. Sheppard who suggests that he may be one of the first members of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society. He describes people who met at his parents' home at '*Tekomt*', Lower Road and discussed the advisability of forming a local history society. When our Society was formed Dr Sheppard, then a schoolboy, became a Junior Member paying about 5 shillings a year subscription, as Member No 1.

He remembers going on a number of digs in the area, often with Mr Carruthers from whom he learned much. Dr Sheppard also remembers Mr Fortescue and Capt. Lowther as well as '*a member who lived in Cannonside*'. One of the sites at which he worked was 'The Mounts', off Randalls Road. He also has some interesting theories about the derivation of some of our local place names.

Dr Sheppard asked for details of our future activities and will visit us when he is next in Surrey; he presently lives in Hereford. Does anyone remember him?

Peter Tarplee

MEMBERS' MISCELLANY MEETING, DECEMBER, 2001.

Gordon Knowles had again organised a variety of speakers for our December '*Members Miscellany*' meeting. The theme was *Wartime Leatherhead*.

John Wettern illustrated the remains of the railway line which had been planned to run through Chessington to Leatherhead. It had never been completed, since the post-war Town and Country Planning Act and the creation of a Green Belt had stopped urban sprawl and ribbon development. Chessington South was built as a *through* station, but one platform is now redundant: the lines terminate as a siding but the embankment runs on, continuing as a narrow band of overgrown land. A station had been planned at Malden Rushett, where there is a service road for a shopping parade that was never built.

Howard Davies had found in the Surrey History Centre, the 1939-1941 logbook of Dulwich Hamlet boys' school, which had been evacuated to Ashted. The headmaster had carefully recorded the times of every '*Alert*' and '*All clear*' air raid siren (often 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. respectively); also the building of shelters, the combining of schools, particularly after a '*land mine*' (parachute bomb) had devastated Dene Road, and the use of the parish church for lessons. The limited amount of lessons possible was supplemented by pupils helping with the potato harvest, and by free admission to Chessington Zoo.

Trevor Marchington's research into wartime defences had led to the discovery of a pillbox at Malden Rushett converted into a bat sanctuary. The reminiscences of the son of the local Home Guard adjutant provided many sidelights. Two hundred Local Defence Volunteers (as they were first called) had turned up at the local police station on the first day; far too many for the ration of one rifle and five rounds of ammunition for every three men. The quarry on Hawks' Hill was the firing range, and exercises were carried out on the Denbies estate. Fetcham Downs was

considered as an emergency landing ground, and a bunker was built there.

Joan Kirby appealed for information about the Letherhead Institute in wartime: what were the dates between which it served as a food and fuel rationing centre?; when were dances held there? At one time a visiting dentist operated on the stage, but when (and how often) did he come?

David Atkinson showed us pictures of his work in Iraq twenty years ago, repairing wartime and flood damage. Christine Wood offered to show a short film of Home Guard activities, including an exercise at South Coulsdon, at a future meeting.

Linda Heath read from the reminiscences of C.R. Butt, who moved to Leatherhead as a child during WW2. He recalled the British Restaurant built behind Wesley House, where basic meals could be bought cheaply and *off-ration*. Fund raising events made *Wings for Victory* and *Salute the Soldier* weeks of excitement.

The Crescent Cinema remained open throughout, and the Victoria Hall theatre reopened. Mr Butt saw two flying bombs (V1s or *doodlebugs*) fall, one destroying a large mediaeval barn at Thorncroft and the other on St Andrews Convent at Ashtead, fortunately both without loss of life.

Derek Renn

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

The Society's latest publishing venture is "*History of Headley*" edited by Jack Stuttard. An extract from it follows:—

"During the middle years of the war, in 1916, the Rev T.E.R. Phillips was appointed Rector of Headley and he was the incumbent here for the next 15 years. He had been recognised internationally for a long time as a distinguished astronomer, having been elected a member of the British Astronomical Association in 1896 when he was 28 years old and later, in 1899, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, becoming its President. At Headley he soon set up two observatories at the Rectory with three large telescopes. Most of the leading astronomers of the day, including the Astronomer Royal, used to attend his annual garden party at the Rectory. Phillips was a popular priest during the remaining years of the war and in the peace that followed".

Other recent additions to the library include:—

SURREY — History

PERCY, Joan – “*In Pursuit of the Picturesque: William Gilpin's Surrey Excursion, the Places he passed and their Claim to Fame.*”

Surrey Gardens Trust, 2001

SURREY — Buildings

BROWN, Rev C.K.Francis – “*Treasures of the Surrey Churches in the Diocese of Guildford*” Biddles, 1943

SURREY — Literary & Other Associations

HARMAN, Claire – “*Fanny Burney: a Biography.*” Flamingo, 2000

SURREY — Records

West Surrey Family History Society

Record Series Nos.28, 30, 31, 33, 34 .

SURREY — Topographical & Maps

BARRETT, C.R.B. – “*Surrey; Highways, Byways & Waterways*”. Bliss, Sands & Foster, 1895

[*Contains several drawings of Slyfield Manor*]

TURNER, Dennis – “*Surrey. (Ordnance Survey Historical Guides)*”.

George Philip/Ordnance Survey, 1988

SURREY — Individual Towns & Villages

EPSOM

ABDY, Charles — “*Epsom Past.*” Phillimore, 2001

EWELL

ABDY, Charles — “*Ewell Past.*” Phillimore, 2000

LEATHERHEAD

BUTT, Charles Richard—“*In Interesting Times: a 1939-1945 Childhood.*” Privately printed, 2001

VARDEY, Edwina — “*Leatherhead: a History.*” Phillimore, 2001

SHERE

Shere, Gomshall & Peaslake Local Hist. Soc. – “*Shere: a Surrey Village in Maps; a Record of its Growth & Development.*”
Surrey Arch. Soc., 2001

These books and other books in the Society's Library are housed within the Letherhead Institute's library room. It is accessible to our members only when the LCA library is open to its members. This does not now include Saturdays. (See details on inside cover of this Newsletter).

Do not forget your current L&DLHS card when you use the library.
Gwen Hoad

HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

On 29th November we launched the book “*History of Headley*” edited by Jack Stuttard at a gathering in Headley Village Hall. I would like to thank everyone who attended this function and entertained our Headley friends who came to see our publications and learn of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society. The evening was very successful with takings from book sales of over £500.

The other publication event was the issue of “*Leatherhead, a History*” by Edwina Vardey. This is an updated version of her earlier “*History of Leatherhead*” containing a considerable amount of new material and illustrations.

The Society is grateful to Edwina and Jack as well as all our members who have helped in any way with these new books. It is good that through the efforts of the Society and its members there are books available on the history of all parts of our area of activity.

Peter Tarplee, Acting Sales Secretary

AN EARLIER BOOKHAM CHURCH

Our past president, Stephen Fortescue, has dowsed successfully for many years. Several years ago he carried out a dowsing survey within St Nicolas Church which showed evidence, he believes, of the foundations of an earlier church which was about 27ft long and 16ft wide with an apse at the east end.

With the development of new geophysical techniques in the early 1990's, his interest was re-aroused and led eventually to an offer from Dr W. McCann of the Museum of London, Archaeological Service (MOLAS) to carry out a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey. Our Society contributed £200 towards payment for the survey done in June 1999.

In brief, the GPR survey confirmed the findings of the dowsing survey with respect to the north and south wall foundations, but was unable to confirm the evidence for an apse or the west wall due to interference from later structural features; viz. tombstones and a service duct.

Neither technique, of course, can tell us if the findings are of Saxon origin.

Full details of the GPR survey have been reported by MOLAS and details of both surveys are given in Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin 351, pages 1 to 4, dated August, 2001. Our president, Derek Renn, has commented in SAS Bulletin 352, page 4, September, 2001.

Copies of these articles are kept with the Bookham records.

B E Godfrey, Records Secretary

WAS THERE A SPY IN LEATHERHEAD ?

Our emails recently brought a letter which poses this interesting question. Here is a summary.

“In the mid sixties, I had the job of apprentice electrician. One autumn we had to go to Leatherhead to fit out a new shop, I think it was Contessa who supply women’s clothing. We lodged in the flat above the shop. One evening after our toils of the day, we

were sitting on the small lawn at the rear of the premises which had a few apple trees, an Anderson shelter in one corner and a fair pile of rubbish in the other corner. We needed to dispose of some scrap, so we thought it a good idea to have a bonfire and clear out the pile of rubbish already there in the corner. So we began to clear it and to our surprise, beneath the pile of rubbish we found a large steel drum, upright and full of rainwater. My mate suggested that we could put some holes in the bottom and use it as an incinerator. When we tipped it over the water poured out and at the bottom we discovered a large slimy black object. Using a hose we washed it down. As my hobby was amateur radio, as it still is, I recognised this object to be some form of radio set. To my great surprise it turned out to be a German transceiver (a radio receiver and transmitter in a single case) that covered the short wave bands, complete with transmitting crystals, very badly corroded of course, but the labelling was still quite readable. It was obviously of WW2 vintage. We all decided that it had probably been in the rainwater since the end of the war. I did have a good look around for signs of aerial or insulators but found none : so why should it have been dumped into the barrel, in haste; just to get rid of it ? Who lived at that address during the war ?

“About twenty years later, living in Banbury, the events of Leatherhead had long faded from my mind. I remember borrowing a book from the library about spies and enemy agents and the efforts of the Ministry of Defence during the Second World War to track them down. It was a fascinating book . The name and author of the book have escaped me, but I have always thought the book was called "*The Secret Wireless War* " or similar. There were chapters on how a special department of the Ministry of Defence had to go around in vehicles, tracking down enemy agents that had made their way into England by whatever means, and were transmitting information back to Germany. It told how vehicles fitted out with direction-finding equipment tried to locate enemy agents by taking bearings on their clandestine transmissions, how bearings were taken and how results were

correlated to achieve their task. This was often difficult as the agents would often transmit from different locations. In one of the later chapters I came to a paragraph which stated that the department in question claimed to have tracked down and caught **all** enemy agents in this country, **except one**, who was known to be located in the Leatherhead area . Just one eluded capture. When I read that, the hairs on my neck stood on end. The memory of the transceiver immediately came to mind.

“Was the flat where the enemy agent was living the same one that we had stayed in? Or was his the business in the shop ? Certainly if this was the abode of the enemy agent the radio transceiver would have had to be fitted into a substantial form of transport, as it was pretty heavy, to enable it to move location to evade capture when transmitting. So, whose shop was that during the war ? Who lived in the upper rooms? An intriguing thought. I remember at the time , saying to myself , that this must be on record somewhere.

“On a trip to Leatherhead in 1998, I found that the shop was still there although the building looks somehow different for I feel that there were attic rooms above those immediately over the shop. I went back to Banbury library recently, just in case the book was still there. No chance ! Worse still, their computers have no record of the books that were held at the time of my loan. I have been trying to find the book ever since so that you may add the relevant chapter to your records. Now that I have a computer and access to the Internet, all the web sites and bookstores could find no correlation or reference to my search. No luck , so far .”

Gordon J.Reason

MASS BURIAL AT LEATHERHEAD

An unusual and unpublicised event took place in Leatherhead at the beginning of 2000. The remains of 1,505 people were re-buried at Randalls Cemetery by the Necropolis Company. They had been exhumed from the graveyard and crypt of St Luke's Church in Old Street, Islington, which has been deconsecrated and

will be used when renovated as a music education and performance centre by the London Symphony Orchestra. The church dates from 1728 but has been abandoned since 1959. Burials ceased in 1850. The exhumation, which took six months, was supervised by an archaeological team and the names of all identifiable bodies were recorded. The re-burial in Leatherhead was carried out between January and March of 2001. Sadly no memorial was erected and none is planned. The burial site has been grassed over.

The Necropolis Company, now based in Kingston-upon-Thames, was formerly called the London Necropolis Company. It had been founded in 1852 in response to a public health crisis in London. The city's graveyards had for many years been overfull and insanitary, and by the middle of the nineteenth century had become a serious danger to health of the capital.

The Company's main function for ninety years was the transportation of London's dead by rail to Brookwood Cemetery in Woking. They had their own private station at Waterloo, with two platforms, one for Christians and one for members of all other faiths and atheists. The rigid Victorian class system persisted even after death — there were three classes of tickets issued for coffins! The station was destroyed by enemy bombing in 1942, and from that time road transport was used. After the war the company was given the job of repatriating many British war dead and came to specialise in exhumations, either of individual bodies or mass clearances of burial sites for redevelopment purposes.

Alun Roberts

LEATHERHEAD TO KIDDERMINSTER AND BACK, BY AIR, 1922

The following extract from "*The Aeroplane*", dated January, 1922 was sent to us by Gordon Knowles.

"MR CHAPMAN'S JAUNT

"Mr W.E.Chapman has recently acquired a new Hewlett and Blondeau built Avro, and by way of a holiday used it to fly to Kidderminster just before Christmas. He left his aerodrome at Byhurst Farm, Chessington, at midday on Saturday, and dropped in near the Caversham Bridge Hotel for lunch. Finding it rather late on

getting away, it was decided to make for Cheltenham, where he passed the night. On the following morning Kidderminster was made in about 45 minutes. On the following day, a little stunting was indulged in, and on Thursday a return was made to Leatherhead, the journey being accomplished with no stops in 65 minutes. The whole trip was a trouble-free one and a fine example of what can be done in aerial touring with an excellent machine. "

The reference to both Leatherhead and Kidderminster caught my eye, the latter because I grew up nearby and went to school there. Chapman was well-known locally post-WW1, he was a Leatherhead businessman who ran a flying school and joy-riding and aerial taxi service for a few years in the twenties. Unfortunately he crashed at Windsor and was badly hurt, so much so that the business folded. His aerodrome was in a field close to the cross roads at Malden Rushett.

Gordon Knowles

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS

After all the excitement of the Museum's birthday celebrations we now have to settle down to the more ordinary things of life ! The Museum re-opens on April 4th and I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have two new stewards and two more in the pipeline. Yvonne and John Hyde Smith have resigned as they feel they have been stewards for a very long time and we thank them for all they have done over the years. Joe Parry has also had to retire because of his wife's illness. As you know Joe has lived in Leatherhead for many, many years and has always been a mine of information about the history of Leatherhead. I am sure we shall still see you about the town, Joe, and we will enjoy stopping for a chat with you.

As in past years we held an enjoyable Christmas social for stewards and helpers at the museum. It was good to have the partners with us, and also the two new stewards.

Training Days

As you know all stewards have to have some training, partly to make sure we are not breaking any Health and Safety regulations and also to see that our high standards of the stewards are maintained. The training days for 2002 all take place in March, they are : - Thursday, 14th and Friday, 15th; then, Saturday, 23rd and Sunday, 24th. The time : 2.0 to 3.30 p.m. You need only come on one of these days but if you are away or ill we shall make alternative arrangements as the training is mandatory.

The Friends' Outing and the Coffee Morning

We have fixed the date for the Friends' outing. It will take place on Saturday, 22nd June. The destination will be announced in the next Newsletter. Do put this date in your diaries.

We have had to change the date of our coffee morning and *bring-and-buy* sale as the date we had chosen clashes with the L.C.A. coffee morning. The new date is Saturday, 29th June, so please change it in your diaries.

Schools Initiative

Encouraged by the number of schools who wish to visit the Museum we are embarking on an educational programme where we first find out what the schools would like to have from the Museum, and then see if we can help them. David Robinson and I will be visiting many schools in the near future, and if anyone is interested in being involved with this work we shall be very glad of your help.

And finally, subscriptions to the Friends are now due. Many have already been received but if you have forgotten, please do not delay.

Thelma Lucas

A CRY FOR HELP : from the Museum Curator

The museum is planning to mount a display called "*Coronations and Jubilees*" to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee this year, but we need some small artefacts to display.

Can any members or friends help us out by lending us anything ? Photographs, printed items etc. would also be considered.

If you think you can help, perhaps you would call the museum (01372 368348). If the answering machine is on, please leave a message.

Graham Evans

LECTURE PROGRAMME

The November Newsletter gave details of the next few lectures : however the relevant information is repeated below :

15th March *'The Civil War in England'* by Alan Turton, Curator of Museum of Local History, Basing.

Alan Turton has a special interest in the English Civil War living history re-enactments. He has taken part in many of these for films and TV including the recent *'History of Britain'* series by Simon Schama.

19th April Annual General Meeting followed by a talk by John Morris entitled *'An Update of the Leatherhead and District Census Project'*

17th May [Please note the following change]

The lecture will now be: *'The Carved Room at Petworth and the Return of the Turners'* by Judith Mills.

The Carved Room at Petworth House is so named because of the superb carvings by Grinling Gibbons which decorate its walls. However, since its creation in the late seventeenth century the room has experienced several transformations. This talk will describe these, and the patrons and artists behind them, including the recent National Trust project to return four pictures by Turner to the positions for which they were commissioned.

WALKS & VISITS

Saturday, 11th May. A field walk over Mickleham Downs led by Judie English. This is the walk originally planned for April 2001, following her lecture to the Society. The walk had been cancelled due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak.

Meet at 2.0 p.m. at the Surrey Wildlife Trust Car Park, Nower Wood, Mill Way, on the B.2033. Parking is by kind permission

of the Trust. Please park neatly, there will be others using the space. Stout footwear is essential ; the walk will be over rough ground and will take approximately two hours.

Please send your applications to Gordon Knowles on the enclosed form.

Saturday 8th June. A return visit to Slyfield Manor 11.0 for 11.30 a.m. Mr & Mrs Richards have again kindly agreed to open their late mediaeval timber-framed house, notable for its early English Renaissance exterior brickwork and the interior woodwork and plaster ceilings. Numbers on the visit are restricted to 20.

A donation to the Friends of Yehudi Menuhin School is requested.

Please send your applications to Dr. Derek Renn on the enclosed form.

FUTURE VISITS

As a follow up to the earlier talk to the Society there will be a visit to the Basing Museum on 13th July, a walk on Box Hill looking at war time sites on 10th August and a visit to London in September, possibly to either the Spitalfields "Time Capsule" on a Sunday afternoon, or a visit to the Museum of London's Archaeological Archives in Hoxton. *See Note below.*

Application forms for these events will appear in the May Newsletter.

AUTUMN VISIT : MUSEUM OF LONDON

It has been suggested that a visit to Mortimer Wheeler House is arranged for later this year. This is the new London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre in Hoxton. It contains the archaeological finds, photographic records and social history collections not on display in the Museum of London, visits can only be arranged by appointment. If you are interested in having an organised visit, please telephone Derek Renn (01372 454880) or return the enclosed coupon, saying whether you would prefer a weekday or Saturday general tour.

LECTURES TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Several members continue to speak to other organisations on behalf of the society. Peter Tarplee has recently spoken to the Bookham & Horsley Rotary Club on '*Blackburne of Bookham and the Atlas Works*'.

An appeal by the Lectures Secretary.

My list of members willing to talk to groups and societies on local history topics has always been small, reduced still further now that Stephen Fortescue and Ernest Crossland have moved away from the district. The society has a large slide collection available for use by speakers.

I now have no one on my list for Ashtead or Fetcham, and need more for Leatherhead and the Bookhams to support the few names I have for these. It would not be onerous, and you would not be called on very frequently.

Give me a ring on 01372 458396 if you can offer or would like to talk about the possibility.

Gordon Knowles

COFFEE SERVERS URGENTLY NEEDED

A plea from Linda Heath

Gordon is asking for members to help give talks on local topics.

If you don't see yourself as a Speaker (or even if you do!) could you help to form a rota to serve the coffee? Nowadays it only needs one person to do it, so, with four volunteers it would only be twice a year. If I do February, three more volunteers would take us to the end of May. Not an onerous task, and no washing up!

We used to carry cups and saucers down the stairs from the stage to the table in front of the stage, plus innumerable kettles, then take it all back up again and then wash all the crockery after the talk. Now, thanks to Joan Kirby's organisation, everything is at floor level, an urn to boil the water, and plastic beakers which can be thrown away. If you can help with this (no sex discrimination!) please contact me on 01372 372603. Remember – no servers, no coffee !

Linda Heath

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2002

Thank you to all those members who have paid their subscriptions. However, I was very disappointed to note that, despite my having sent standing order forms with the notice for payment of subscriptions, less than half of those paying by this method did actually update their instructions to the bank. I am enclosing with this newsletter a reminder notice to those concerned.

If you have paid your subscription in full, your new membership card will have been enclosed with this Newsletter. If you have not received a card, please let me have your full subscription as soon as possible. The rules of the Society provide that if subscriptions are not paid by 31st March, membership will lapse.

Jack Barker, Membership Secretary

